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LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS.

THE FOUR NEEDS OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

The needs of the University Library can be summarized very simply:

- (1) More books.
- (2) More room for these books.
- (3) More room for readers to read the books, and
- (4) More high grade assistants to help the readers to the books they need.

The University Library today has 315,000 volumes, which is exactly twice the size it was eleven years ago. It is adding over 17,000 volumes per year and yet the men in the different faculties are clamoring for more books. The research men in several departments claim that we do not have enough material in the newer fields of investigation. A new man comes to the chair of dermatology and reports deficiencies in the literature of the subject, which must be made up if his work is to be effective from the first. The Engineering Department branches out into new lines like railroad and sanitary engineering, and at once there is a call for the corresponding professional literature. A new course is to be offered in the Literary Department and it is found that the Library has nothing on the subject worthy of consideration. The deficiency must be made up if the course is to be successful. The Department of Political Science extends over at least seven fields, and must have enlarged resources in order to do its work properly. The Department of History is reorganized and augmented by new professors, who are to develop courses new to our University. Here is one of the most crying needs,—for not only are the results of recent historical research in many lines lacking, but the great historical sources stretching back for a period of years are in many cases wanting. The new Graduate School is to stimulate research throughout the University and we are to be besieged with requests for books, periodicals, monographs, theses and publications of learned societies helpful to the advanced students and professors in many lines. How are we to meet these demands? Only by a larger book fund and more endowments.

Yes, but some one will say, where are you going to put these new books if you get them? During each of the last two academic years the annual accessions to the libraries on the campus used up over 2,000 feet of shelving. In other words, in 1910-11 the volumes added to the book stock of the University filled approximately 700 three-foot shelves, and the last year showed a similar record. This means that for each year we must provide ten fifteen-foot double-faced ranges of book stacks to keep pace with the present rate of growth of the collections. The fact that all the new accessions are not stored in the General Library does not affect the problem. The departmental libraries are full to overflowing and when we add a large set of books

to the Engineering Library, for example, we must take back to the General Library an equally large number of older books, in order to accommodate the new ones. This is problem number two. And the solution? A new book stack, possibly running parallel to the present one and connected by bridges and, let us hope, provided with service elevators.

With the continual increase in the number of students comes a natural growth in the number of library readers and borrowers. When the library building was opened in 1883, the book stock consisted of 38,262 volumes. The total number of students in the University at that time was 1,440, of whom 524 were in the Literary Department. Today the total number of students is approximately 5,900, of whom 2,400 are in the Literary Department. The collection of books is more than eight times as large as it was in 1883. The book storage capacity of the building has been quadrupled by the extension of 1898, by the erection of shelving in the Reading Room in 1904, and the conversion of the Old Art Gallery into stacks and reading rooms in 1910-11. A new generation has come into being and the methods of study have been revolutionized. Instead of the text book we now have lecture courses, collateral reading and research work, requiring a much greater use of a much larger library.

The Fine Arts Department has opened a new field to the students. The lecture courses are largely attended, and require a large amount of supplementary reading. The work with the debaters increases yearly, necessitating an increased use of periodical literature. The Pedagogical Department has increased its requirements in supplementary reading 50 per cent in the last five years. The huge classes in American history have a requirement of seventy-five pages of reading a week. All this extra reading sends the students to the Library more frequently and means heavier work and greater congestion at the delivery desk. It is safe to say that one-half of the books drawn from the desk for reading in the Library, are taken by freshmen and sophomores. Today there are 700 freshmen in the Literary Department (an increase of one hundred in one year) doing collateral reading for their English and European history classes, and they must devote much of their time to reading in the Library for the rhetoric assignments. Figures speak louder than words. The increase in the Reading Room circulation is shown by the following figures:

1911:	Oct. 16,710,	Nov. 20,576,	Dec. 14,784
1912:	Oct. 22,166,	Nov. 23,550,	Dec. 16,709

The congestion at the desk is so great at certain hours in the day and on certain days that the students in the rear of the throng waiting for books give up all hope of approaching the desk for fifteen or twenty minutes, until those in the front ranks have been served. Until different arrangements can be made, there seems to be no hope of a change in the present congested condition.

An imperative library need at Michigan is an undergraduate reading room or study, such as is found in Goldwin Smith Hall at Cornell or in Hamilton Hall at Columbia. The college reading room at Columbia is somewhat more than fifty feet square and around the walls on open shelves

are placed 2,300 volumes of historical works selected for the purpose by the Department of History, and 3,000 up-to-date books of collateral reading chosen by professors in other departments. Books of required reading for the several courses of undergraduate study are kept on special reserve shelves behind a loan desk and are issued on call slips. These are borrowed from the General Library and are returned when no longer needed by the class. A study with an open-shelf library of from six to eight thousand volumes, selected with a view to the needs of the undergraduates, would be found most helpful in relieving the congestion in our General Library and would be a great help to the students. Only by some such means can we meet the increasing problems of our reading room service. No reference work of a higher grade can be done by any one but the Reference Librarian until the clamorous and eager underclassmen are waited upon. The more serious need of the advanced student must frequently remain unattended to until the desk assistants have a moment to recover from the onslaught. Much of the work with the underclassmen could be done as well, if not better, if it were segregated in a study room situated in close connection with the class rooms.

Two of the departments have libraries in their buildings, administered in all details by assistants from the General Library. These are the departmental libraries of Engineering and Chemistry. The former (opened in 1905) consists of 10,000 volumes including architecture, and the latter (opened in 1910) consists of 8,000 volumes. In both cases there is in the library a complete card catalog of the contents and these cards are also duplicated by entries in the public catalog in the main library. To have the assistant in charge detailed from the library staff is much better than to leave the departmental collection in the charge of a changing staff of instructors or laboratory assistants. The departments of natural science at an early date gathered laboratory collections which have grown into departmental libraries of botany, geology, mineralogy and zoology. It is hoped that in the contemplated science building, where provisions are to be made for a library room, these departmental libraries will in the main be combined into one library of natural sciences. The superintendence in the science group could be improved and the cost kept down by proper coordination of the single collections into one science library, with an adequate reading room. While it might be found advisable to transfer to such a science library some of the sets now in the General Library, the relief from the impending congestion in the main stack would not be great enough to warrant serious consideration. The main collection is bound to grow at such a rate that this relief would represent shelf room for not more than the normal accessions of a few months.

Lastly, but most important of all from an administrative point of view, is the question of retaining an efficient library staff. During the past month three of our assistants have been called to better paid positions in other libraries. We appreciate the compliment but deplore the result. Of course, the University of Michigan has long been a training school for the faculties of sister institutions, and the Library must share in this educational work, but the Library can not meet the new demands upon it unless



it has a staff equal to the task. It must have a corps of university graduates, with special library training, and special fitness for the work which is to be done at Ann Arbor. "It is a fundamental principle of industrial efficiency," remarks the *Library Journal* editorially, "to use your existing plant to its full capacity before increasing your plant more than is necessary to keep up to the times. New machinery and new books must, indeed, be added if the factory and the library are to be kept up to date, but the effectiveness of the plant is not measured by the new expenditure."

By citing the above quotation I do not wish any one to infer that we have joined the ranks of the commercial efficiency enthusiasts. Efficiency, we are told, has no regard for traditions and if you begin giving up college and university traditions you might as well call for the resignation of all the teaching staff and start *de novo*. If, in considering the reinstallation of any particular study it were asked, Does it pay? you would have to answer it by asking another question, What do you mean by pay? Are you always to divide the cost of any particular course by the number of students and if the result bears too great a disproportion to the tuition fee, must we conclude that the course does not pay? So, also, in the Library. Are the work done and service rendered to be measured merely by the number of volumes handed out over the desk? If we are to work for statistics alone we shall have no time for the reader who needs help in understanding the card catalog, or the periodical indexes, or the use of United States documents.

This brings up the larger question as to the aim and scope of a university library. "The ideal of a library, according to some," said Sir Arthur Grant, vice-chancellor of the University of Edinburgh, "is a collection of fine copies of books, complete in various departments, rich in unique specimens,—all beautifully arranged without spot or blemish, and reposing undisturbed in serene dignity. But a truer conception of wealth tells us that it consists in use, rather than in possession. And to this latter conception the University Library corresponds: there is an immense wear and tear of its books, but after all it was their *raison d'être* to be worn out by reading, that the ideas contained in them might take a fresh start in the minds of men." We are trying at Ann Arbor to make the University Library a means, not an end in itself. We expect to have our books used. It was a binder for a book fancier and not a university librarian who, when complaint was made that the binding of a particular book was not what it ought to be, said reproachfully, "Why, you've been reading it!"

Non ministrari sed ministrare is the motto of the entire library staff. We have a special work to do at Michigan where students come from every corner of the globe. Shall it be said of our library, as it is so frequently said of the great foreign university libraries, that the books are there but they do the students little good because of difficulty of access, or an insufficient staff of assistants? We shall fail in our entire purpose if we do not keep the library alive, up-to-date, with ample accommodations for readers and with a staff equal to the growing demands made upon it by the constantly increasing body of students and professors.

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